(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor; and

(c) by when a bill in this regard is likely to be introduced in the Parliament?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : (a) and (b) Based on the recommendations made by the National Commission for Women, proposal is under the consideration of the Department of Women and Child Development to amend the Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 to make its provisions more astringent and effective.

(c) No time limit can be indicated at this stage.

Free text books under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

†3275. SHRI P. K. MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether text books are distributed free of cost to the students from Class I to VIII under "Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan";

(b) if so, whether text books are not being provided free of cost to the general category students from class VIth to VIIIth; and

(c) if so, whether such discrimination is conforming to the spirit of the Constitution?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI MD. ALI ASHRAF FATMI) : (a) to (c) The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) programme has provision for distribution of free text books to all girls and SC/ST children in classes I to VIII if there is no existing State Government scheme for the same purpose. This is a special provision to assist the weaker section of society.

Lack of nutritional food

†3276. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that more than 70 per cent of poor children,

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

women and girls have been found anaemic due to lack of nutritional elements in food in rural areas in the country;

(b) whether it is also a fact that no action has been taken in this regard despite confirmation of the same in all the surveys conducted by Government; and

(c) if not, the steps Government propose to take keeping in view the seriousness of the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH) : (a) As per the National Family Health Survey II (1998-99), percentage of woment (15-49 years) and children (under 3 years) suffering from Iron Deficiency Anaemia was 51.8 and 74.3 respectively. The National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) Surveys, however reveal that the prevalence of anaemia in pregnant women has reduced from 87.5% (1989) to 74.3% (2003), and the percentage of anaemia in children (1—5 years) was 66.9% in 2003.

(b) and (c) It would not be correct to say that no action has been taken by the Government. The Government of India, in fact has been implementing various programmes *viz.* National Nutritional Anaemia Control Programme, the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme, Reproductive & Child Health Programme, Mid-Day Meals Scheme, Public Distribution System, Food for Work and other poverty alleviation programmes, Food & Nutrition Education etc. for providing food and nutrition security to its people.

Besides, Micronutrient Malnutrition Control Projects are also under implementation in certain parts of the States of West Bengal, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. Moreover, a 'National Rural Health Mission' has also been, recntly, launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

There are multiple causes for anaemia such as poor intake of iron rich foods, prevalence of hookworm infestation, malaria, other infections, poor hygiene and sanitation, inadequate compliance under iron and folic acid supplementation programme of the Government etc. As such, pace of reduction in anaemia has not been as much as planned.